

## **Harvest Mouse (*Micromys minutus*)**

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### **CURRENT STATUS**

The harvest mouse is one of Britain's smallest and most elusive mammals, which was once described as "common and widespread", but is now considered to be "vulnerable". They have no legal protection under the Countryside and Wildlife Act 1981 but have the same protection as other mammals from deliberate cruelty under the Wild Mammals Protection Act. There has never been a comprehensive survey of this species in Nottinghamshire, so the current status is largely unknown; however, the County Mammal Database contains around 95 records (as of July 2005) with the majority being post 2000. As the bulk of survey work took place south of the Trent, it is no surprise that the largest number of records come from that area. These records show that unmanaged grassland communities near to watercourses are one of the important habitats for this species. There have, however, also been recent records from the north of the County, the most recent being a nest found at Misson Carr in 2005. It is clear that more survey work needs to be undertaken in order to define the status of this species in the County and to identify the main habitat types before any real conservation measures can be initiated.

### **THREATS**

The main factors currently affecting harvest mice in Nottinghamshire are:

- Lack of knowledge of habitat preference and appropriate conservation management techniques in the County
- Possible loss of suitable habitat due to changed farming practices, including increased agro-chemical use
- Loss of linear features such as hedgerows and field margins which can cause isolation of colonies
- Road-building schemes and urbanisation which has fragmented habitats and created barriers to dispersal
- Lack of awareness of the species in general
- Climate change may present a threat through changes in rainfall patterns affecting juvenile mortality, but the scale of this is currently unknown

### **CURRENT INITIATIVES**

- A small number of recorders are monitoring harvest mice in the south of the county
- Training courses are organised by Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT) for surveyors each Autumn

## **TARGETS**

- Increase knowledge of the status of harvest mice in the County
- Maintain existing harvest mouse populations in Nottinghamshire
- Increase the distribution and size of harvest mouse populations in Nottinghamshire
- Identify the most effective conservation measures and make them widely available
- Raise awareness of the harvest mouse with the public and landowners
- Promotion of techniques in habitat management for field margins including drain and dyke management

## **PROPOSED ACTION**

### Policy and Legislation

- Through planning and development control, ensure existing sites are protected.  
Action: LAs, EN, NWT, EA
- Support agricultural policy changes to encourage retention of field margins and other linear features, with grants to support landowners in this action.  
Action: DEFRA, EN, NWT, FWAG

### Advisory

- Use the results of the surveys to identify the most important habitats and effective conservation management techniques  
Action: NWT, FWAG, EN
- Use the above information to provide advice on management of harvest mouse habitat to private and public sector landowners and managers.  
Action: NWT, FWAG, DEFRA, EN, LAs, SFT  
Work with farmers and their advisors to adopt Integrated Pest Management Techniques that will reduce pesticide use that has been shown to affect harvest mice  
Action: FWAG, DEFRA  
Work with the Internal Draining Boards and the Environment Agency to encourage vegetation management along watercourses that will benefit harvest mice  
Action: NWT, FWAG, DEFRA, EN, LAs

### Future Research and Monitoring

- Organise countywide training in identification and survey techniques  
Action: NBGRC, NWT
- Initiate countywide survey  
Action: NBGRC, NWT
- Monitor existing sites and ensure suitable habitat is maintained  
Action: NBGRC, NWT

- Identify areas where linking of sites through the creation of margins, beetle banks and new hedgerows could allow dispersal  
Action: NBGRC, NWT, FWAG, SFT, NFU, CLA

#### Communications and Publicity

- Attempt to improve public appreciation of small mammals and harvest mice in particular , through events, talks and training sessions  
Action: EN, NWT, LAs, FWAG, NBGRC, SFT
- Produce a leaflet on the harvest mouse, its habitats, threats and habitat management.  
Action: BAG partners

#### **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

- Report sightings of harvest mice or their characteristic woven nests to the Biological Records Centre at Wollaton Hall. Although you are not likely to see a harvest mouse in the wild, domestic cats often bring them in to houses
- Become a harvest mouse surveyor
- Be aware that grass verges left uncut may be being managed for small mammals and have not necessarily been neglected